DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 619 PS 010 031

AUTHOR Marindin, Hope
TITLE Handbook for Prospective Single Parents.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 43p.; Prepared for the Committee for Single Adoptive Parents

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adoption; Budgeting; Child Care; Equipment; *Guides; Health; *One Parent Family; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Responsibility

ABSTRACT

This handbook for prospective single adoptive parents provides information on locating and adopting a child, necessary clothing and supplies for children of various ages, health and day care arrangements, expenses incurred after adoption, various financial benefits and subsidies available to the adoptive parent, and legal and financial provisions which should be made by the adoptive parent for the child's support. A final section on the adoption experience focuses on the personal feelings and anxieties of the adoptive parent, and includes accounts of the parenting experiences of three particular kinds of single person adoption: trans-racial adoption, adoption by an older single person, and adoption by a single man. (CM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED157619

Handbook for Prospective Single Parents

Prepared and Distributed
for the Committee for
Single Adoptive Parents

© Hope Marindin 1976

3824 Legation Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20015

No part of this Handbook may be reproduced without permission of the author.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Hope Marindin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

PS010031

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	Locating and Adopting a Child	1
	Locating a Child - The Process	
2.	Clothing and Supplies for Various Ages	7
	Furniture - Equipment - Clothing - Equipment for the Parent	
3.	Health and Day Care Arrangements	10
	Day Care - Health	
4.	Costs to Budget For	14
	Adoption Costs - Day Care - Social Security - Clothing - Equipment - Food Medical Care	
5.	Financial Benefits	18
	Deduction for Child Care - Lower Income Tax for Head of Household - Adoption Subsidies	
6.	Legal and Financial Provisions	21
	The Will - Financial Arrangements	
7.	The Adoption Experience	23
	Changes in Your Life - Telling Your Child - Examples of Single Parent Adoption: Trans-racial Adoption; Adoption by an Older Single Person; Adoption by a Single Man - Handling Questions	

Section 1 LOCATING AND ADOPTING A CHILD

It is difficult but not impossible for a single person to become a single parent. It takes persistence and, in the majority of cases, it takes a certain amount of money. In a sense this is fortunate, because a lot of thought and determination should be invested before a lifetime responsibility is taken onto one person's shoulders. If you have begun the quest, you have already learned that the number of adoptable children has dropped sharply in the United States, because of the increased use of contraceptive devices and access to safe abortion. Although adoption by single persons is legal in every state, adoption agencies give preference, in the assignment of their limited staff, to couples for the placement of children--and even couples are having to wait. At least two studies have shown that one effect of the weeding-out process created by these obstacles is that single adoptive parents tend on the whole to be more stable and determined than average adoptive couples.

Single applicants stand a better chance with agencies if they are willing to adopt the "hard-to-place" children: who are school age and up; or--less often now--members of a racial or ethnic minority; or who may be handicapped physically, emotionally, or mentally; or siblings whom the agency does not want to separate. There is a certain irony in the fact that the handicapped child would appear to be in greater need of the presumably more wholesome two-parent family, and the more constant presence of the non-working mother; but if the law of supply and demand supersedes the law of two-loving-parents, single people have not complained. The hard-to-place child and the easy-to-place child are alike in their need for love and their capacity to respond.

Locating a Child: You can locate a child either through an agency or independently, through sources not licensed in the United States. Licensed agencies come in several forms--in your own area there is usually a public agency that is an arm of the town, city, or county; and one or more private agencies, often affiliated with religious faiths. These are found in the telephone book under the local government listing or in the yellow pages under "Adoption" or "Social Service Agencies." Usually such agencies are at least as concerned with helping the natural parents as with placing children for adoption. They also have programs for assisting parents to solve their problems and thereby keep their children, and provide foster care for infants and children not legally free for adoption. Sometimes they can offer subsidies to assist adoptive parents with medical or educational costs to enable them to adopt a handicapped child who requires special assistance.

Other kinds of licensed agencies operate within a state, or nation-wide, as a kind of clearinghouse of information on children waiting for adoption. By definition, these will be the hard-to-place children. Still a third kind is the international placement agency which places children from one or more foreign countries. Like the local adoption agency, some of these organizations operate or actively support programs in the foreign country devoted to helping families and children--medical centers, orphanages, programs of food and other assistance. Actual child placement may be a relatively minor part of their operation.

Sources that are not licensed in the United States are even more varied, ranging from an individual--usually a lawyer or a doctor--placing the child of a client, to an orphanage in another country with whom the prospective parent deals directly. A person contemplating an independent adoption should carefully check the laws of his or her own jurisdiction. All but two states permit independent (or private) adoption, but many hedge it about with special requirements--for example, in one state the mother must transfer the child directly; in another there may be a go-between, but he may not accept a fee. A distinction may be made in your state between prohibition of independent adoption of a child located in your own jurisdiction, and allowance of independent adoption of a child located in another jurisdiction. It is wise to use a good lawyer to assist you here.

Applicants faced with the unwillingness of licensed agencies to accept them often look to this approach and are vocal about their frustration with "bureaucracy" and "rigidity." Nevertheless, there are two good reasons for the distaste of authority for the private route: (1) if the placement goes sour for whatever reason, there is no licensed agency to accept responsibility for the child--who then becomes the responsibility of the state; and (2) private placement comprises not only the "gray market" of reputable and honest sources, but the "black market" where exorbitant fees are charged, sometimes with no safeguards for the prospective parent, and where the placement can be so far from legality that the adoptive parent lives for years in the fear of a challenge by the natural parents.

It must be said, however, that many couples and many single people have happily adopted children by the independent route with complete success and legality, and the reason is understandable. The number of people who want children greatly exceeds the capacity of the licensed agencies, taken as a whole, to assess them and locate children for them. If you look in this direction, however, do it within your local law and with the help of a good lawyer, and be responsible about the care and support of your child should anything happen to you.

Not all lawyers are experts in adoption. To make sure that you find a lawyer --for either agency-sanctioned or independent adoption--who is competent and well-versed in the law of your jurisdiction as it applies to adoption, it is a good idea to look around carefully and ask for referrals, rather than just letting your fingers do the walking. An excellent source is the nearest association of adoptive parents. If you do not know of such a group, you may be able to locate one by writing (with a self-addressed stamped envelope) to the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 6 Madison Avenue, Ossining, N.Y., 10562.

The Process: The following is a general outline, which may vary in specifics:

(1) Investigate the laws of your jurisdiction to determine whether there are pre-adoption requirements such as filing an application with the court; age limitations or differentials between parent and child; certification by a local licensed agency; prohibitions affecting independent placement and so on. If you are contemplating

adoption of a handicapped child, look into possible subsidies available from the government, including Medicaid; check their requirements and the length of time they last. As of the Spring of 1976, forty states and the District of Columbia had enacted into law some form of subsidized adoption (available, however, only to children who are wards of the state that offers them). Also look into assistance from private organizations organized to assist victims of particular conditions or diseases (see Adoption subsidies, Section 5).

(2) Try to arrange for a "home study" to be made of you--now required by nearly all states for the protection of the child. This is an inquiry into your fitness and capability for becoming a parent, and it necessarily means a fairly intimate probe of your motives and past family relationships, among other things; as well as of such practical matters as your financial situation and living quarters. One might protest that natural mothers are not required to undergo home studies before giving birth, but adoption is not a natural process. It is a transaction whereby one agent transfers the whole life of another person into the hands of a third person who is nearly or completely a stranger, and the home study is the best instrument now available to avoid a transfer that is irresponsible, if not injurious to the child. A more serious criticism, brought recently by associations of adoptive parents, concerns the great variation in standards of assessment, amounting sometimes to capriciousness, of adoption caseworkers.

Be that as it may, the home study is very nearly a sine qua non for adoption. Neither a licensed agency nor a regional adoption clearinghouse will approve a prospective parent without one. The regulations for the I-600 process of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service require that the applicant satisfy the Attorney General that proper care will be furnished the child if admitted to the United States. Most of the states require that a home study of the prospective parent be completed by a licensed agency before adoption can become final; and even where a home study is not required, as with many independent sources, a favorable study can help to persuade the source to award a child to this applicant instead of another.

Because a home study is so desirable, it is worth expending time and energy in the attempt to obtain one. Try to establish a connection with a local licensed agency at least for the home study, and with extreme luck, for actual placement of a child. If one agency will not accept you (perhaps they don't take single applicants, or they have a two-year waiting list) try another. An agency might accept you for the home study if you undertake to locate your own child--which you might prefer to do anyway. One caution: if an agency accepts you, but you find that you and the caseworker assigned have absolutely no rapport, you should first do your best to work with that person and if it is not promising, try to get another assigned. At best an unsympathetic caseworker can do nothing for your morale; at worst the resulting appraisal can damage your chances rather than help them. If all else fails, and if the law in your jurisdiction permits, you might be able to find a qualified adoption worker (with the proper social work degrees) who could perform a study on you on her own time.

The agency wants to know: your emotional stability, the intensity of and reasons for your desire to adopt a child; your age (agencies frown on people in their early twenties, on the reasonable grounds that they may lack maturity and will probably grow their own children in a few years, and on people over fifty on grounds of stamina); your financial capacity (adoption takes some money, and raising a child to adulthood is estimated to cost $70,000 all told); your living space or plans to improve it; and your access to the emotional support of family and friends. A single person should discuss his or her plans to provide nurturing for the child if the parent should die while the child is young. The agency needs to know, too, any restrictions you place on the kind of child you will adopt, in terms of ethnic or national background, type of handicap, or age.

(3) Look for a child. The local agency may have a hard-to-place child that you would adopt; failing that, you should request that they list you with one of the statewide or nation-wide registries of hard-to-place children (such as the Adoption Resource Exchange of North America [ARENA], 67 Irving Place, New York, N.Y. 10003). Most such registries prefer to deal with an applicant only through the applicant's licensed agency. Two notes are worth making here: First, it may take some pressure on your part--some agencies are incomprehensibly reluctant to do this--and you should personally check with the registry from time to time; and, second, what is considered hard-to-place in one part of the country may not be so in another. Unfortunately, there is social pressure today in many states to place black children only with black parents, and American Indian children only with parents who can prove that they have some American Indian forebears. This Committee strongly opposes such pressure, because in our opinion it places an ideological position well before the welfare of children, and because it assumes that social attitudes that exist today will not change in the next ten or fifteen years.

The Committee for Single Adoptive Parents makes available to its members (or to non-members, for a fee) a list of sources of US-born or alien children, with some information on type of child, cost, and time involved, which is updated from time to time.

If you are checking out independent US adoptions, through an individual such as a doctor or lawyer, the only way is to talk to everyone you know, and keep talking, about your desire to adopt a child. These sources are hard to find and getting scarcer.

(4) After you have contacted the sources that appeal to you, wait. It will take time before you are approved, and weeks or months before you are assigned a child. Try to walk the line between pestering an organization that may be operating with terribly limited staff and funds, and being so considerate that they forget about you. If you are writing any organization or anyone, include a stamped self-addressed envelope. The US Postal Service sells International Coupons that will pay for the postage of a foreign source to enable it to reply to your questions.

If you are actively involved or registered with more than one organization, and you settle on a child from one of them, let the others know so that they can take you off their lists.

(5) [For adoption from abroad] Once a foreign source has agreed to assign a child to you, it is wise to start the immigration process immediately. The child will need a passport and an exit visa from that country, and an entry visa from the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. For most countries a single applicant may now file a petition for this entry visa on INS Form I-600. Not all agencies, and not all foreign sources, may yet realize that a new law, P.L. 94-155, enacted on December 16, 1975, makes it possible for an unmarried US citizen at least 25 years of age to utilize this relatively quick process, which allows the child to enter the US as the "immediate relative" of the prospective parent. The parent must have "complied with the preadoptive requirements, if any, of the child's proposed residence" (the state of the prospective parent), and the Attorney General of the US must be "satisfied that proper care will be furnished the child if admitted to the United States."

An alternative process, and one not open to children from the Western Hemisphere at all, is the "non-preference visa." Normally, this would only be used under a few circumstances: if the petitioner has already secured approval for two I-600 petitions for other children; if few people are applying to enter the United States from that country; if the prospective parent is under 25 years of age; or if the child is over 14 or has two living parents. It is usually a lengthier process.

The regulations for either the I-600 process or the non-preference visa can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations in any large public or university law library, codified at 8 CFR Part 204. The prospective parent should write or visit the nearest branch office of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service to apply for either process.

If you have not been assigned a specific child, but have been invited to come to the organization and select a child yourself, you may apply to the District Director of the nearest INS branch office to begin preliminary processing. If you have information on a specific child, you should file all the required evidence for the I-600: the child's birth certificate or other identification, the mother's legal release of the child or a certificate of abandonment, your fingerprints, proof of your age and US citizenship, evidence of legal termination of any marriage, and proof of ability to support the child.

(6) Acquiring Custody:

(a) In a foreign adoption, if you are not using an international placement agency, locate a lawyer in that country. The foreign source itself may well assist you here; if not, you may find an association of parents, some of whom may have adopted from that country and may be able to advise you. Your child will need, as well, a passport and an exit visa, because he or she is still a citizen of that country. You may well have to pay for translating a number of documents into the language of that country, and there will also be a fee for "validating" documents in succession at your state capital, the US State Department, and the consulate of the foreign country nearest to you. The child must be given a check-up by a US Public Health Service official before leaving the foreign country.

(b) For adoption in the United States: If you are adopting a child who resides in your own jurisdiction, you will comply with your state law. If you are adopting from another US state, an Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children has been adopted by thirty-four States * (as of the Spring of 1976).

The intention of this legislation is to regularize procedures for transfer of custody of children across state lines and thus facilitate it; however, because it adds another decision-making layer to already existing levels, it may make placement slower and perhaps more difficult. Time will tell whether the Compact has the effect of smoothing or interrupting the adoption process.

(7) Transportation: If you are adopting a foreign child but not working through an established placement agency, you must arrange transportation for your child to the United States, and provide for an escort as well. US airline stewardesses often do this work at a very reduced air fare; again, parent associations can be helpful with information on locating escorts and on fees. If you travel to the country you can of course escort your child yourself. If you are adopting a child from another US state you will in most cases go and fetch your child yourself.

(8) Legal Adoption: Once the child is home with you, you may file for adoption, a process that usually takes six to eight months (many parents adopting from abroad complete the adoption process there, in person, which of course obviates the need to do it over again here). If you have had a home study by a licensed agency, your caseworker will make one or more follow-up visits to your home to see how you and the child are managing, and will then file a report with the court, which the judge considers along with your adoption petition. If you have not had a home study and have located your child independently, you will usually bring the baby into your own jurisdiction (having complied with the laws of the baby's jurisdiction) and file for adoption in your local court. The judge will direct the local public adoption agency to perform a study of you and the adoption process may take a little longer.

In the case of adoptions of alien-born children, your child may apply to be naturalized as a US citizen two years after the adoption is final, wherever the adoption took place. Until that time you must register the child with the Immigration and Naturalization Service as an alien, each January.

For an excellent and thorough review of all facets of adoption, read The Adoption Adviser, by Joan McNamara (Hawthorne Books, Inc., New York, 1975).

---

* California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Section 2 CLOTHING AND SUPPLIES FOR VARIOUS AGES

Furniture:

Crib Infants (up to around 6 weeks) prefer to be cozy, so a portable carry-bed is best. Then you can switch to a porta-crib size (24" x 42") or straight to a standard size (27" x 54"), in which they will stay until some time around three years. In addition to fitted crib sheets, several square feet of flannel-faced rubber sheeting is a good investment, to be placed between the sheet and the mattress.

Changing Table (optional)

Chest for baby clothes. If this can be equipped with a padded top and some way of holding the baby on, this can also serve as a changing table. Two good baby restraints are a buckling strap which must be attached to the chest, or padded bolsters joined by terry cloth--the whole business is washable.

Play pen (optional). Useful for ages 5 to 15 months.

Feeding table, or high chair, or booster-seat, in decreasing order of cost.

Rocking chair (optional). Awfully soothing for small and larger children.

Baby gate, for keeping a baby inside or outside a room, upstairs or down.

Equipment:

Diaper pail. You may want diaper tongs with this.

Diaper bag; waterproof, useful also for transporting bottles. Expect to replace it about twice a year.

Bottles and a means of sterilizing them (optional).

Lap-sized square of flannel-faced rubber sheeting is optional but useful when feeding.

Back-pack (optional). Good soft ones are the Snuggli or the Happy Baby Carrier; an excellent lightweight rigid-frame carrier is the Gerry-pack.

Suspended bouncing seat-sling (optional). Children between 5-8 months adore it and will bounce and smile for an hour or more. However, it may be wise to stop using it around 8 months, as some pediatricians worry that it might interfere with learning to crawl.

Stroller: convertible, for infants, to a carry-bed. A useful alternative is a non-convertible stroller with space in back to carry packages; another is the umbrella stroller which is really lightweight and easy to pack on a bus.

Infant-seat, adjustable. Good for feeding an infant, carrying it around in, and resting the infant in a shopping cart or on a coffee table.

Equipment, cont.

Car-seat, for use until the child figures out how to get out of it. Make sure to get an approved seat such as the one made by General Motors for infants, in which the child rides backwards; and for ages 8 months on up, an approved padded kind. A good restraint for a walking child is a web harness that is fastened to the floor of the car, which allows the child to sit or stand but not to roam.

Bicycle seat (optional).

Bouncing chair (optional). Excellent to park baby in until he or she learns how to crawl out; make sure it is designed so that the springs or supports cannot shear off a finger or toe.

Potty seat. For boys, make sure there is a guard in front to direct the stream down. A potty-chair is an alternative.

Clothing:

You will get gifts and especially hand-me-downs of the utilitarian stuff--sweaters, rain boots, overalls. Your friends with children will be delighted, or appalled, or both, to find you a parent after being a hold-out for so long, and will unload bags full of clothing and equipment. Nevertheless, it will probably be impossible to restrain yourself in children's departments in stores. A minimum list of clothing for various ages follows:

Infants: Both sexes--diapers, plastic pants to cover the diapers, diaper pins, white jersey snap-fastened or pullover tops, nightgowns, one or two light blankets, and cardigan sweaters.

One-and-two year olds: Both sexes--all of the above, plus knit shirts, overalls with snaps between the legs, pajamas, socks and shoes, and heavier sweaters. Toddler snowsuits. For girls, dresses and tights in various colors.

Three- and four-year olds: For boys, short and long pants and knit tops with short or long sleeves, also shirts. Jackets or one or two suits for fancy occasions. Be sure to have pockets wherever possible, even in pajamas. Rain slickers and boots. For both sexes, training pants and underpants as diapers phase out. For girls, pants suits and dresses with long and short sleeves; raincoats. Snowsuits for both sexes, and mittens (most useful with a cord between them to run inside the sleeves). Small children adore small umbrellas.

Equipment for the Parent:

Washer and Dryer: Whether the child is in or out of diapers, the laundry piles up in a way unbelievable to an adult, and you can't just "rinse it out at night." You will be exhausted at night, for a while. If you don't live in an apartment with easy access to a safe laundry room, you might consider investing in a laundry set. Check out discount houses, and even second-hand machines in want ads.

Automobile: Even if you have a live-in housekeeper, live in a city, and commute to work by bus, you will find that getting around without a car is very rough if you are bringing a baby or an active child along. Marketing is hard--and the amount of food will increase. Visiting your friends by bus will be difficult when you have to juggle a child, perhaps a diaper bag, and a stroller. You don't have to go in for the traditional station wagon, but you might start looking at second-hand ads and used- or new car dealers.

Section 3 HEALTH AND DAY CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Day Care: When the infant or child actually arrives, single parents usually take time off from their jobs, ranging from a few weeks to a few months, in order to help the child establish herself or himself in the new home. If this is the first child, such a shake-down period is also vital to the new parent, to permit her or him to become acquainted with the jobs and responsibilities of parenthood. Sooner or later, however, unless you have a live-in relative or inherited wealth, you will have to arrange for all-day care. This can come in a variety of forms, and each can be satisfactory.

Single adoptive parents have sometimes found themselves on the defensive against the charge that, because their children must be cared for by others all day, they are depriving the children of a healthy, happy childhood. By contrast, the child in the ideal family (two-loving-parents and mother-in-the-home) remains at home until he ventures out to kindergarten. It is interesting, then, to discover that one of the leading proponents of the latter treatment, Dr. Jerome Kagan of Harvard University, has reversed himself after a careful comparative study of young children nurtured at home versus in a very good day care center. His conclusions were that "Attendance at a day care center staffed by conscientious and nurturant adults during the first 2-1/2 years does not seem to sculpt a psychological profile very much different from the one created by total home rearing . . . day care and home control children were equally likely to choose the mother as the target for solace and attentive nurturance when they were bored, tired, or afraid . . . the mother's psychological impact on her child seem[ed] to be greater than that of the female caretaker in the day care environment . . . the effects of the home appear to have a salience that is not easily altered by the group care context. The family has a mysterious power, which is perhaps one reason why it has been the basic and most stable social unit in this and other societies for so long a time." *

1. Live-in. A live-in housekeeper/babysitter is given room and board plus a salary. This is probably the closest approximation of the mother-at-home, and assures that someone will be there at all times. You can also get the bonus of help with cooking and cleaning, depending on the rate (See Section 4) and the arrangement.

Locating live-in help is not easy nowadays, however, and in many cases parents look for individuals who are not native to the United States. The most common methods are to advertise in daily and, if available, neighborhood newspapers (asking for references), and to ask your friends who have live-in help. Some employment agencies handle live-in help, and often there are non-profit agencies established specifically to assist Latin-American immigrants and visitors. One such is AYUDA (Aid), in the Latin-speaking neighborhood of Washington, D. C.

---

* "The Effects of Infant Day Care on Psychological Development" by Jerome Kagan, Richard B. Kearsley, and Philip R. Zelazo; Symposium of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, February 19, 1976.

Legally, you are the employer of this person, and you should declare her wages to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, filling out a W-2 form for her and deducting for Social Security (See Section 4). Consult the Internal Revenue Service on income tax matters. Also, it is not only a humane but a sensible policy to provide health insurance for your live-in help. The rate is high on an individual basis (from $32 to $44 a month in Washington in early 1976), but often a "domestic" can be included in a group policy available through the parent's place of employment.

2. Come-in Care: Daytime care by someone who comes to your house is another possibility. You will need to employ this person on the order of 50 hours a week, counting the time you will need to get to and from the standard eight-hour job. If she comes from another part of town her transportation time makes her day even longer.

You have the worry of whether or not the sitter will arrive each day on time --or whether she may call in sick, perhaps forcing you to use your annual leave. The advantages are that this approximates the mother-in-the-home almost as closely as the live-in arrangement, and as with that situation, the child remains in his or her familiar home surroundings. You can also often arrange for cleaning and cooking assistance from the sitter.

You should treat this person as any regular employer does his employee--and that means allowing vacation time and sick leave. This, of course, means that you may well have to take off from work yourself if the sitter is ill, and that her vacation will probably coincide with yours.

Again, you are the employer of this person and should withhold income tax and social security deductions.

Placement agencies may frown on the use of unlicensed babysitters for day care--something to keep in mind if you did, in fact, obtain a child through an agency which is keeping you under follow-up supervision until the adoption is final. Check the local public welfare agency for lists of licensed sitters. Otherwise, you can often locate a sitter by advertising in the newspaper or neighborhood paper, or by asking friends. Ask for references and check them out.

3. Nursery School-Day Care Center: Day care centers will sometimes take children as young as 2-1/2 (and some rare ones will take infants), although in almost all cases they prefer children to be toilet-trained, which can be chancy at that age in the case of boys. Take time off from work and visit several such centers--months and months before you need to enroll your child, because the good ones fill up early.

In our opinion, you should avoid the centers where the children are either allowed to run wild or are disciplined little robots, and if you find that the center requires the children to wear darling little uniforms from the age of 5 up, depart rapidly. Check the ratio of children to adults, counting adult aides as well as professionals: five children to one adult is very good, eight to one is good, and more than that is to be avoided. Investigate the role of parents in the center: real involvement or just sewing curtains?

These centers can be superb, with wonderful equipment, lots of exercise, educational value, and loving adults. There is usually a nursery school program in the morning and supervised play in the afternoon when the children have begun to flag. They usually run from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. all year round, with only the legal holidays observed--real day care centers for the working parent. Meals provided can include breakfast and lunch as well as a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack, and the good centers have the help of a nutritionist in staying away from junk foods.

Your employer, if he is large and enlightened, may operate such a center for the benefit of his employees, in which case it will be partly subsidized and the cost will be lower in addition to all its other benefits. If not, look in the Yellow Pages. Call the child- or family-services bureau of the local department of public welfare; they may have a list of centers with information on each. Ask if they know of an organization of day care centers in your city or county. Above all, ask friends for names and opinions of centers.

4. Take-to: Often the least expensive is the system where you ferry your child to a sitter who looks after him or her in the sitter's own home. She has no travel time and can do her housework and cooking during the day. Naturally you want someone near where you live. You are not responsible for income tax deductions, but you may well be for social security withholding tax (See Section 4). You can look for a sitter who has children of her own around the age of yours, or one who looks after other children as well. To locate such a sitter, advertise in your local or neighborhood newspaper. Consult your local department of public welfare: they may license sitters and keep a list of them, which will give you at least a floor on quality. Ask friends.

The disadvantages here reveal the advantage of the at-home systems. Avoid the sitter who "keeps" a horde of children and uses television as a babysitter. Some studies have indicated that prolonged television-watching, even of the best children's programs, dulls creativity in a child because the communication between the child and the screen is not two-way. Other drawbacks: the transportation time lengthens your day, cutting into your time for playing with and working with your children. You have less control over what your child learns and takes in.

The take-to system can work very well, however, if you take the time and trouble and perhaps expense of locating a good sitter, and some can be very, very good indeed. Don't be upset, in fact, if at times the child seems to regard the sitter as Mommy and prefer her to you. Your child probably sees a little more of her than of you. It is rare for a sitter-situation to last more than two or three years, however, while you go on forever, and you are apt to become more interesting as the child grows older.

It would be far-sighted of you, as well as humane, to treat the sitter as your employee and establish a certain number of paid sick leave days and vacation days.

For an excellent review of all types of child day care, see Choosing Child Care, (Parents and Child Care Resources, 1855 Folsom St. San Francisco, Calif. 94103, 1976. $3.00 per copy, postage included).

Health Care: Most single parents must work, and can participate in health plans, sometimes even a choice of plans, through their jobs. For those who are self-employed the rates are considerably steeper than they are for those who are part of a group plan--if, in fact, they can obtain private medical insurance at all. (This is a point to keep in mind if you contemplate changing or quitting your job.) Nevertheless, it is worth while to take part in a high-option family plan where possible, and use it for all it's worth. Look at your insurance policy, however. Some may not cover your child, or may not cover all pre-existing conditions your child may have. By and large, children are healthy, but they need innumerable shots and boosters and they can have allergies that require lots of lab work. Note: many health plans will consider your child covered from the moment he or she arrives in your home--some even before the flight from a foreign country. Check with your health plan and perhaps exchange letters on the subject.

Children adopted from disadvantaged countries sometimes arrive with parasitic or stubborn, chronic infections. We have found that most pediatricians are not accustomed to the kinds of diseases, particularly the parasitic infestations, that children may bring with them. Several of us have adopted children from Asia who exhibited persistent diarrhea, for example; we were first told to take milk out of the diet and, when the diarrhea continued, were given diagnoses ranging up to "your child is terminally ill with cystic fibrosis". Finally we found doctors with the appropriate information, whereupon the children were cured almost overnight. The point is, find a parasitologist who can test for and treat parasites from that particular area of the world.

Parents who join a Group Health plan must use a doctor or doctors who participate in the Group Health Organization--but that includes all specialties from dentists to pediatricians. They must also bring their children to the Group Health building, which may be fairly far from home. On the other hand, Group Health rates cover complete health care and thus provide a saving over insurance plans, especially as the number of people in the family grows.

It is usually possible to select your own staff members for continuing non-emergency care. One can be sure of consistent handling of emergencies, too, even if not by your regular physician (but your child will already have developed relationships with many of the nurses and aides). The Plan offers a parent two main comforts: (1) you do not need to shop around for needed specialists; they are available and communication is easy, and (2) one's total medical expenses for expected and unexpected care are known from year to year and are reasonable. Additionally, because group health care is the old Chinese plan of paying your doctor to keep you well and out of the hospital, you can be sure that no unnecessary medical treatment will be recommended.

Alternatively, you may enroll in a health insurance plan and look for your own doctors. You may wish to seek out a group arrangement where several pediatricians share an office. The advantages here are specialization--one will usually be an allergist, for example-- convenient location, and the fact that they take turns being available by telephone all night and on weekends.

Section 4 COSTS TO BUDGET FOR

Adoption Costs: The cost of an adoption varies tremendously from place to place and child to child, and it is simply impossible even to hazard an estimate of average cost. Instead, we shall list the kinds of expenses that an adoptive parent can run into, depending on the kind of adoption she or he undertakes, and note that these expenditures can often be stretched out over many months:

The home study: Most public agencies charge no fee, and agencies supported by community funds are apt not to charge. Private agencies may charge a flat fee or, more frequently, a sliding scale related to the income and perhaps the other expenses of the applicant. The fee can be as low as $25 (for the adoption of a hard-to-place child), to the upper hundreds for a high-income parent with no other children to support. It is paid in installments, with the last chunk after the arrival and final adoption of the child. If you are fortunate enough to obtain a child through this agency as well, this and legal fees will be your only costs.

The international agency placement fee: If the prospective parent uses a placement agency here or in Canada, the fee will be several hundred dollars--often, however, this includes the child's air fare to the United States. Examples: Kuan Yin of Canada charges $1000, entirely refundable to single applicants if the adoption cannot be completed. Welcome House charges $1300 to $3150 depending on income and whether or not it also does the home study. Some go as high as that; others as low as $400 (unfortunately the latter groups usually don't accept single applicants).

The independent adoption fee: Domestic gray market sources, if you can find them, charge regular legal or medical fees; we have heard of domestic black market fees of $25,000 or more. Internationally, orphanages or individuals abroad generally charge in the lower hundreds--sometimes in the form of an expected "donation" to the orphanage.

Visit abroad: For some foreign adoptions, the parent is required to come to the source and stay for several days or perhaps two or three weeks, while the adoption or other legal arrangements are completed; and there will of course be the costs of room and board while you are there. Associations of parents who have adopted from that country can be most helpful on the recommendation of places to stay and estimation of costs of living: the total is likely to be in the very low hundreds.

Travel costs: If you are adopting a child from abroad, or from elsewhere in the United States, there will be a one-way charge for the child plus an escort; if you go to pick up the child you will of course add your round-trip air fare. For children coming from abroad, consult a parent group or a parent who has adopted from that source wherever possible; they are apt to know how to contact airline personnel who will charge only a fraction of the regular fare. Depending on the country and the situation, this can range from the low hundreds to over $1000 for a single adult.

Legal costs: Your local lawyer's fee to handle the adoption will be one of the lower expenses you face--under $100 to the lower hundreds, depending on the area of the US you live in. Even here, associations of adoptive parents can sometimes put you in touch with good lawyers who charge low fees for adoptions--particularly for hard-to-place children. If you are adopting independently from a foreign source you will need a lawyer in the foreign country to handle whatever action takes place there--adoption or merely transfer of custody; his fee is likely to be in the lower hundreds. At least in the local adoption, there will be court costs too--a negligible sum.

Miscellaneous fees: For a foreign adoption, you should budget another $200, to be safe, for extra small and unanticipated costs. The major ones are translation of required documents into the language of that country; "validation" of documents by your State, the US Department of State, and the nearest consulate of that country; telephone cables and calls between you and the source; postage costs and filing fees.

Day Care: Costs for the several methods outlined in Section 3 ran about as follows in early 1976 in metropolitan Washington, D. C.--a high-cost area:

Live-in:	$100 a week and up, plus room and board
Come-in:	$50 to $75, depending on amount of additional assistance
Day Care Center:	$25 to $45 a week, depending on amount of subsidy
Take-to:	$25 to $50 a week

It should be noted that domestics are now covered under the minimum wage law. This would apply to both live-in and come-in child care, provided you employ the person more than 8 hours a week and pay her at least $50 a calendar quarter (any consecutive three months). The rate is scheduled to rise: it became $2.20/hour on January 1, 1976, and will be $2.30/hour on January 1, 1977.

Social Security: Whether you hire someone to come in to your house to look after your child, or take your child to another person's home for day care, you are that person's employer and, legally, you ought to see that social security taxes are paid for that person.* Customarily, both the employer and the employee contribute to the social security payment, each at the rate of 5.85% of the wage agreed upon. For instance, if you pay a babysitter $30 a week, the employee would contribute $1.76 (deducted from her wage) and you, the employer, another $1.76. Alternatively, the employer can contribute the whole amount herself.**

---

* The exception is when the babysitter publicly announces herself as offering day care, setting her own wages and hours. Then she is legally regarded as a "self-employed person" who should pay her own social security tax (at 7.9%).

** Actually by paying her contribution you have raised her wages. You divide her salary by .9415 (arriving at $31.86 in our example), continue to pay her $30 but show her salary as $31.86 on the form. Then send in a check for $3.72, or 11.7% of the higher wage.

Payments, which may be sent in by mail, are made every three months. The forms, and the helpful instructions and information, are available by telephone request from your local Internal Revenue Service Office, to whom you also mail your payments.

It should be added that many babysitters flatly refuse to pay social security or to have you pay it on their behalf, for reasons of their own which may or may not be obvious. But the point must be made that if they change their minds, even twenty years later, and decide that they would like to receive social security benefits, and can prove that you paid them for babysitting and did not make the proper payments, you are liable for not only the back taxes but a penalty for non-payment!

[Pertinent portions of the Social Security Law are cited at 42 USC 409 (wages), 410 (employment) and 411 (self-employment). The above information was obtained from the U. S. Social Security Administration, HEW.]

Clothing: Baby clothes can be bought at low cost or high, depending on you. As indicated elsewhere, you will get a lot from your friends. Shoes are likely to total consistently the most expensive item. Unless your child needs corrective shoes, however, you can profitably check out the large low-cost chains, such as Sears or J. C. Penney, which are likely to be several dollars below the local department or children's specialty store prices, for perfectly good shoes. Also check high-grade second-hand clothing stores, such as Junior League outlets.

Equipment: This, again, depends on whether you want to inherit or buy. If you choose to buy, do check out discount toy chains (for example, Childrens Supermart in the Washington, D. C. area sells cribs, strollers, tricycles etc.) If you buy second-hand, garage sales are wonderful sources--check the want ads in your city or neighborhood newspapers.

Food: Infants are not expensive to feed, as a rule. However, allergy to milk is not uncommon, and in that case you will have to locate and use milk-substitute formulas that do cost more than the milk-based formulas. Look for a large discount drug-store, which will stock even the most esoteric of soy-based or lamb-based formulas; the prices will often be markedly lower than at the supermarket. Babyfood jars are an expensive way to purchase food if you compare to mixing it up yourself in a blender, yet the total cost is still not high for a week's supply. Especially for a working parent, they may be worth the time and effort saved. As your child grows older--age three and up--he or she begins to put a dent in your food bill, especially for milk, and many parents switch to partial or complete use of non-fat dried milk.

Medical Care: Even a healthy infant is going to require a considerable expenditure for medical care, and should you acquire a handicapped child or an orphan from a country with a considerably lower economic base, the chances are that medical care would be much more intensive and prolonged. For this reason, many parents find that investment in a "high-option family plan" for medical insurance is satisfactory.

There are many types of medical insurance plans; usually they pay most or all of laboratory fees, treatment performed in the doctor's office, and hospital care. They are not likely to pay for regular physical examinations (except for associated lab work), dentists' bills, or cosmetic surgery. The cost for a self-employed parent is markedly higher than for an employee who belongs to a "group" at his or her job. Investigate before you enroll, because it is usually possible to choose among plans offered by different companies at slightly differing fees and with differing options and methods of obtaining the refunds.

An alternative is the prepaid "group health plan." Under this arrangement, which is becoming more and more popular from coast to coast, a regular fee, somewhat higher than the premiums paid for medical insurance, provides complete health care by the Plan's own group of doctors, who represent a wide range of specializations. There may be more than one group health plan available to you, so it is worth investigation.

Elsewhere in this Handbook the matters of health care and subsidies are discussed, but we remind the prospective parent here that there are many specialized organizations which can give considerable assistance to the parent of a child with, for example, cerebral palsy, or hearing problems, physical crippling, or mental retardation; and it is absolutely vital that the prospective parent investigate these sources first before settling on a child who will need long-term medical attention of any kind. But many parents of "special" children have found that with a good health plan medical costs, even for necessary operations and repeated therapy, can be absorbed without undue pain.

Section 5 FINANCIAL BENEFITS

Partly offsetting the expenses listed in the preceding section are some income tax benefits of becoming a parent, particularly a working parent. Moreover, subsidies of various kinds are sometimes available to assist an adoptive parent.

Credit for Costs of Child Care:

Section 504 of the 1976 tax reform law, P.L. 94-455, amended the section of the income tax law entitled "Certain Expenses to Enable Individuals to be Gainfully Employed," codified at 26 US Code 214.b. As of calendar year 1976, it allows a parent a direct credit against his or her income tax for child care he or she must have in order to work. This includes expenses for household services as well as child care, as long as you have to pay these costs in order to work. There are certain requirements:

- You have to be maintaining a household; that means you have to be paying at least half of the cost of your household.
- If you pay a relative to care for your child, you must make contributions (half of which you usually deduct from her wages) to her Social Security insurance, and she may not be your dependent.
- Your child must be under fifteen years old.

This credit is non-refundable, meaning that if it exceeds your total tax, the excess cannot be refunded to you.

You do not need to itemize your tax deductions in order to take advantage of this new provision. You figure your total tax and then:

- If you have one child under fifteen, you subtract from that tax either $400 or 20% of your child care costs (up to a maximum cost of $2000), whichever is less.
- If you have two or more children under fifteen, you subtract either $800 or 20% of your child care costs (up to a maximum cost of $4000), whichever is less.

The administrative interpretation of this law is still evolving. For example, according to one administrative ruling, if you are sick for any length of time and draw sick pay, you are not considered to be working. Therefore during that time, you may not take tax credit for child care expenses provided by a housekeeper in your house. The ruling does not consider the case where you send your child out

to a day care center, instead of employing a housekeeper. But a second decision appears to cast doubt on the first: the present rule is that sick pay is taxable as earned income unless the taxpayer is completely disabled; therefore, the latest decision appears to be that if the employee is paying income tax on his or her sick pay, it is only fair to continue granting the tax credit for child care expenditures. Taxpayers faced with this situation should check with the nearest Internal Revenue Service branch, or with a competent tax specialist.

In order to file for this credit, you must obtain and file IRS Form 2441. On this form, you must identify the provider of child care (the day care center, relative, or lady down the street), and the provider's relationship to you. You must also obtain an Employer's Social Security Identification Number (separate from your personal Social Security number) if you are employing an individual, rather than a day care center. You show this number on Form 2441, but you do not list the social security number of the provider.

This may present a problem for some parents. Many day care providers prefer not to have all their sources of income identified with the Internal Revenue Service, for reasons of their own, and become rather anxious if social security* or income tax is mentioned.

Lower Income Tax for the Head of a Household:

Simply becoming a parent lowers your income tax. A single person with no dependents, earning an annual income of $9,000, is in the 25% tax bracket, approximately. The same single person who is the head of a household is in the 23% bracket, approximately. In addition, like any other parent, you are entitled to claim an exemption of $750 per child.** You deduct this amount from your Adjusted Gross Income after itemizing your deductions.

You have the option of benefiting from this exemption every payday (fill out a W-4 form for your employer), and thus retaining a little more of your paycheck each payday; or of waiting to declare it when you make out your income tax return. The latter step will increase your tax refund (or cushion the impact for the self-employed). Either course is legal. If you choose to take a larger tax refund this means that you are, in effect, using the government as your savings bank--but you are not collecting interest on this "savings account." However, those of us who

---

* But see the discussion of liability for social security deductions, in Section 4.

** Even before your adoption becomes final, you may claim this exemption, as long as you can show that you provided over half the child's support that year.

have difficulty putting away a little every payday find that the loss of a very few dollars is outweighed by the joy of having a lump sum come in once a year. This is very handy for large purchases such as the down payment on an automobile, or a large repair to the house.

Adoption Subsidies:

As of the Spring of 1976, forty States and the District of Columbia had enacted various forms of adoption subsidies, although not all have implemented them fully. Basically, there are two kinds of financial assistance for adoption:

1. Maintenance subsidies: These are usually some fraction of the amount paid to foster parents for the support of a child, and are related to the income of the recipient. Some states confine subsidy to lower-income recipients; others use the rule of thumb that the adoption of a child should not appreciably decrease the standard of living of the parents. All are confined to children who are wards of the state (or of some private agency within the state) and thus are not available for foreign-born children. The subsidy goes with the child, not the parent: therefore, if you adopt a child from another state which has a subsidy program your child can receive the subsidy whether or not your state has a subsidy law. In some cases the payments can continue for years (although they are re-evaluated annually), ending only when the adopted child reaches majority.

2. Special needs subsidies: Far more varied in kind and duration than the maintenance subsidy is the aid given to enable parents to adopt a child who needs medical or psychiatric work or special education. There are even one-shot grants to defray legal fees or the cost of travel for needier adoptive parents. Parent groups are attempting to have the granting of special needs subsidies tied solely to the need of the child; at present, in most areas, it is also related to the income eligibility of the parent.

In addition to publicly-funded subsidies, for children with various kinds of disablements, a number of well-known private organizations offer specialized help --the Shriner's Hospital and Easter Seal for crippled children, Lion's Club for blindness, the National Association for Cerebral Palsy, the American Speech and Hearing Association and so on. Again, the duration of the assistance varies.

Your local community fund can direct you to these agencies, or you may write the national information organization called Aid to Adoption of Special Kids (AASK the DeBolts), P.O. Box 11212, Oakland, Calif., 94611 [tel. (415) 451-1748]. Another source is Porter Sargent's Directory for Exceptional Children, available in any large library, which lists programs and training including more than 1000 clinics. The State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation can also give advice on what is available for older and special children. An excellent source is the Closer Look program of the National Information Center for the Handicapped, 1201 Sixteenth Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 [tel. (202) 833-4163].

Will: Make your will--not usually an expensive process, but one no parent should overlook. In it, specify who you wish to assume guardianship of your child upon your death. (In the District of Columbia, an orphan is legally a ward of the court, whose custody is up to the judge, but in practice the judge follows the desires of the parent. Check the laws in your jurisdiction.) Make financial arrangements to support your child, or children. One good method is to place all your assets in a trust for your children which will be effective only on your death. Name the children's guardians and a bank as co-trustees. The bank's trust department will manage the funds and the income will, in practice, go to the guardian to defray the costs of raising your child. Then your child will inherit the principle at whatever age you specify, and guardianship will cease.

An important point: Make sure that in your will you identify your children as adopted, and make it clear that you wish these adopted children to receive your estate. The reason is that the legal term, "issue," which is usually used to refer to children in wills or trust documents is not always understood, legally, to comprise adopted as well as biological children. If you do not make clear that you consider your adopted children to be your "issue," there may be legal hang-ups interfering with their rights to some parts of your estate.

Financial Arrangements: It is important to provide as large an estate as possible so that it is not a sacrifice for the child's guardians to take your child on if you should die. And naturally, your goal is to provide as well as possible for your child when he or she reaches majority. Figure out what amount of money will be needed by the guardian each year; then (perhaps with a bank's help) the amount of principle needed to generate this income. If you own a house, the sale of it, minus the outstanding mortgage, should provide a good chunk of that principle, given the present real estate market. The rest of your estate should be assembled from:

Pension plans. Find out how much you are entitled to, and make your estate, or the trust if you are creating one, the beneficiary

Any stocks, annuities, mutual funds or the like; make your estate or the child's trust the beneficiary

Social Security benefits

Whole-term life insurance, if any

Savings, if any

Any assured inheritances, such as trusts where the principle comes to you or your "issue" upon someone else's death

Any remaining gap could well be filled by "term insurance." This is low-cost insurance which provides a large amount of money should you die soon, and less as you grow older (when the amount in pension plans, or your savings, or the equity in your house, can be expected to increase). It is sometimes nicknamed "mortgage insurance" because it is useful to pay off the outstanding mortgage on a house, and declines at roughly the same rate as your mortgage balance.

Regarding insurance, as pointed out in Section 4, it pays to shop around among the better-known insurance companies. It has been demonstrated, notably by Herbert Denenberg, Insurance Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that there is an astonishing range of costs, from company to company, for the same benefits.

It is certainly uncomfortable to contemplate making provisions for your child after your death. But consider: it is part of your obligation to your child. It will be traumatic enough if you should die before he or she reaches majority; leaving your child unprovided-for only intensifies the tragedy, and places a terribly heavy burden on your chosen guardians. Your will should be reviewed periodically, as situations change and your children get older.

The Changes in Your Life:

When you break the news that you want to, or plan to, adopt, the older generation--your parents, for example--may be aghast at the idea of the physical fatigue you will face, and the sacrifice of your mad social life and your carefree ways. It sometimes seems, as older parents look back on their children's infancy, that they remember chiefly the exhaustion and forget the delight. This may reflect perhaps the fatigue they feel now, or perhaps the enormous shock to the system, lasting for months, that physically giving birth creates for a woman.

It is true, it is exhausting. You may find yourself going to bed earlier than you have since you were seven, especially in the months right after you get the child and especially if you are working a full-time job. But it's not permanent exhaustion; a good night's sleep cures it--that is, when you can get a good night's sleep. If you are able to take time off from your job to shake down into parenthood, this will help; paid assistance will help over a longer period. But most of all, experience will help. A good bit of your fatigue comes from emotional factors, including a feeling of inadequacy or fear that you may have disguised from yourself. Once you learn how to do a job, whether it is changing diapers or typing legal briefs, the job becomes much less tiring.

A child does tie you down considerably, unless you invest regularly in baby-sitters, and a parent working a full-time job sees his or her children little enough as it is. Generally, one child is pretty portable, even if you are taking along a stroller, a diaper bag and possibly a special toy. Two children, however, are something like 2-1/2 times the problem, especially if they are under three years old. You must hold one in your arms and keep the other from getting hit by a car, plus haul the stroller, diaper bag and tricycle. A visit is more like a procession.

Don't feel guilty, however, about having a social life. If you were dating a lot before you got the baby, don't chop your friends off cold. You haven't taken the veil, and you need recreation. Your child is too young to have any strong moral beliefs about going steady versus playing the field. If your child is older he or she may try to marry you off, try to prevent you from marrying, or feel embarrassed about your social life, depending on his or her psyche and your relationship. Remember, however, that these days a lot of his or her playmates will wind up with one parent via divorce or widowhood and these parents probably date too.

It is undoubtedly true, moreover, that it is a good idea for the child of a single parent to see a great deal of an adult who is the opposite sex from his or her parent. Although about one in ten single parents is a man, the majority will want to supply a "male image" for their child, especially from age three on (when it is thought a child first perceives that there are two sexes in the world). This person does not have to be a steady date or lover. Age is not as important here as gender, and most single parents we have observed have met this need by ensuring a close, frequent relationship with a grandfather or uncle [or grandmother, aunt, or housekeeper, for a male single parent], or else by contriving to include a strong stable male in the day-care situation. This can be the husband of a babysitter or a full-time teacher or aide in the day-care center.

In general, you can anticipate that a baby will change your life, but will not completely change your life style. If you were in and out of friends' houses before, you will continue to do a lot of visiting--but with a child. The increased expense may deflate your entertainment budget from champagne down to beer, but you'll go on having people over. Single parents differ as widely from each other as do married parents, on this and every other score.

Marketing and shopping will present problems that your ingenuity can solve. Working parents can usually use their lunch hours for a lot of the things that used to be done on a leisurely Saturday afternoon. The terrifying problem, however, is when your child gets sick. Little children's illnesses can blow up fast, and although they are not usually seriously ill, they obviously feel so rotten and perhaps so sleepy that a parent can be petrified. Flash fevers are an example of this. Don't feel the least hesitancy in calling your doctor and your best married (or single) parent friend for help--all parents have been through this purgatory and know just how you feel.

By the time single parents reach the point of adopting, most of us have absorbed, consciously or almost accidentally, a good deal of theory about child-raising. Some of it may be contradictory. Often the effect is to make us worry overtime about the consequences of this or that action, from "I shouldn't have lost my temper" to "I ought to get married." For parents fearful of making a misstep that would permanently warp their children, Dr. Edna Small, a child psychologist who is herself a single adoptive parent, has the following reassurance:

> It is pretty easy to look at the background of an obviously disturbed child and pick out what seems to be the causative mistake or bereavement or misfortune. But for every damaged human being, there are hundreds more who have undergone the same circumstances and survived comparatively whole and happy. Much more important than any single event or action is the whole interaction between two separate personalities, over the whole time of parenthood.

There is even a growing body of opinion among child psychologists that, in fact, a little adversity is helpful to a child's growth and that, as San Francisco psychologist Richard Farson says, "it may be that the situations we try hardest to avoid, for ourselves and for our children, would actually be the most beneficial to us." At the least, he feels, parents can relax about the varied influences and experiences their children may encounter. Studying a group of children from adolescence to age 30, Berkeley, Calif. psychologist Arlene Skolnick found that "those with the most trouble-free childhoods seemed to peak at around 18 and to go on to have adulthoods that were often disturbed, while the ones that were the most messed-up in early life were better able to get their bearings later on." Studying another group of "eminent people," researchers found that only 3 of 10 had what is commonly called a "healthy" childhood. The one factor in common, whether the parents were kind and supportive or cold and manipulative, was high expectations for themselves and their children [from a Los Angeles Times article by Eleanor Hoover, March 7, 1976].

Telling Your Child:

Single adoptive parents are not likely to attempt the fiction that their children were biologically born to them, so that the decision whether to tell or not to tell does not come up here. The questions, rather, are when and how much. Many single parents of infants feel that the sensible approach is to introduce the idea naturally from the start, with gradually increasing detail, so that the child feels that he or she has "always known." On the other hand, don't make a big production out of it, or refer to it constantly. Child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, for one, feels that great emphasis on the idea that your child came to you from someone else, and that the natural mother did not keep him or her, will cause great anxiety as to whether you might send the child away in turn.

Bettelheim sees a dilemma for the child in his attitude toward his biological mother. If the mother is presented as a wonderful woman who hated to give up her baby, then why in fact did she? He, the child, must have been very bad or unlovable. Alternatively, if the mother "didn't want her baby," she seems mean and unloving, and the child is led to hate the natural mother. Bettelheim's conclusion is that self-hatred is the most destructive to the child, and that alternative no. 2 is the lesserof two evils. Many single parents, and other child psychologists, have taken the other tack, however.

One rather diplomatic approach is to say "I don't know what your biological mother was like, but she must have been a nice person, because you're so nice." This is not necessarily a dodge, especially for those single parents who may have adopted children from war-torn or poverty-stricken countries in which nothing at all is known of the parents, including whether or not they are alive.

Another source of anxiety can be the "chosen baby" myth--"I went to the orphanage and I picked out the nicest baby I saw, and that baby was you!" Not only is such an exercise nearly impossible in the United States in this age of limited supply, but the child may well wonder what would have happened if he had had a stomachache that day and hadn't shown up so well. Outer darkness?

Many of us, for reasons we may not be fully aware of, are often very candid about our children's being adopted, and introduce the subject with much background detail gratis, so to speak, even in situations where it might not come up naturally. (There may be a slight proselytizing zeal here, or various kinds of mild embarrassment.) It might be wise to play down this activity when your children reach age three or so, in order to make sure that they do not feel like display pieces instead of normal children. One excellent idea is to write a special story for your child about his or her very own adoption. If the child comes from another part of the US or from abroad, pictures of that area can be used and supplemented with your own photographs of the child when he first arrived, and of his new family. This is likely to be a very popular "book."

How much to tell is another controversial question. There are several national organizations * built around the principle that the person adopted should be permitted to learn the names of her biological parents, as well as other pertinent information (far more women than men seek this information). This is one end of

a range of views, and one which often causes adoptive parents considerable anxiety and pain. The other extreme is the decision taken by many single--or married--parents to tell the child nothing about his or her natural parents. Putting yourself in the child's place, if this were handled badly, you might develop a lessened feeling of self-worth and identity; a panicky feeling that you have only one person to depend on in the world. Of course, in the case of foreign adoption, especially from a war-torn country, the adoptive parent in fact may know nothing, even the child's exact age.

A middle ground might be simply to tell the child what fragments are available --in a natural, understated way--without doing additional research, and let the child do what she wants with them later on. One might feel that by age 18 or so--the age when any young person, adopted or not, is generally going through an identity search--if the adoptive parent has not won the basic love and loyalty of the child, there is no hope of ensuring it by withholding this information.

According to Adoptees in Search, what the adoptee seeks is not, first and foremost, the recovery of her biological parents, but information about her origins, including medical, ethnic, and religious data, so that she can say to herself "now I know who I am." Usually, however, the only real source of this information is the biological mother and in fact AIS speaks of a "confrontation" rather than a "reunion" with the mother. Another point of view is that of the Association for the Protection of the Adoptive Triangle ** which believes that although the child should be given all possible information, the identity of the biomother should be kept confidential. As a middle ground, many states now seem to be moving toward allowing the biological mother to indicate in writing at the time of relinquishment whether or not she wishes her identity to be protected.

In the opinion of Linda C. Burgess, former director of the Peirce-Warwick Adoption Service in Washington, D. C., it would be better "to tell both the natural parents and the adoptive parents that the child, moving to adulthood, will probably try to put together the threads of his life and seek his origin. If the probability of disclosure could be understood by all parties, adoption might be handled in a more matter-of-fact fashion. Adoptors would accept an eventual reunion; the natural mother would face the future with greater honesty; adoptees would get full, accurate answers to their inquiries as they grow up."

> She continues: "Making information available may not necessarily lead to a reunion. In fact, the more information at hand, the less likelihood that the confrontation will seem imperative. The adopted adults I have been in touch with are uncertain about the reunion and fearful of the unknown on which so much emotion has been expended. . . [but] It is difficult to make a case for denying the adoptee his right to know who he is and where he came from--especially since being adopted was not his idea." ***

---

* ALMA, founded by Florence Fisher, 17 Chittenden Ave. New York, N.Y. 10033; Orphan Voyage, founded by Jean Paton, Cedar Edge, Colorado, 81413; and Adoptees in Search, founded by Roberta Ross, P.O. Box 41016, Bethesda, Md., 20014

** Association for the Protection of the Adoptive Triangle, founded by Ralph Maxfield, 8950 Robin Drive, Des Plaines, Ill. 60016

*** from National Adoptalk, Jul-Aug. 1973, National Council of Adoptive Parent Organizations.

Examples of Single-Person Adoptions:

The following comments by single adoptive parents describe their own parenting experiences, and illustrate three particular kinds of single-person adoption:

Susan Weber: TRANS-RACIAL ADOPTION

I adopted my bi-racial daughter, who is a black-white "mixture," when she was fifteen months old. She is now almost six. As a single parent, trying to establish a home and raise a child while working full time, I have been most interested in how other people experience a trans-racial adoption, what problems they encounter and how they solve them. As a result of many conversations and my own experiences, I am convinced that the life style of a trans-racial home in our society is most pervasively characterized by ambivalence--not about love for the bi-racial child, but about the most appropriate behavior as a parent. In recent years the key stimulus for this ambivalence has been the feeling of many blacks that trans-racial adoptions are wrong. This position has been most clearly articulated by the National Association of Black Social Workers at their national conference in 1972:

> Black children belong, physically, psychologically and culturally in black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves and develop a sound projection of their future. Human beings are products of their environments and develop their sense of values, attitudes and self-concepts within their family structures. Black children in white homes are cut off from the healthy development of themselves as Black people . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The socialization process for every child begins at birth. Included in the socialization process is the child's cultural heritage which is an important segment of the total process. This must begin at the earliest moment, otherwise our children will not have the background and knowledge which is necessary to survive in a racist society. This is impossible if the child is placed with white parents in a white environment.

This kind of position has been articulated by the American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and most other significant "minorities" in the United States, and there is much to be said for it. It is important to examine its essential rightness, as well as wrongness. Its assumptions are rooted in sound child development theory. Its conclusions do not necessarily follow. Black children in white homes are not necessarily cut off from the healthy development of themselves as black people. And the socialization of a black child does not organize itself primarily around survival in a racist society.

If you are white, and you are going to adopt a child of another race, you have options open to you. You can parent a black or Chicano or Puerto Rican child so (s)he develops into an adult who can relate to American society in more than its racist

aspects. Assisting this development is a task all parents face--to nurture, to educate, to create opportunities and to build values with a child which will help him or her live in this world as the best possible human being. But for the parent in a trans-racial family, the pressures of the trans-racial status create a great deal more ambivalence about every parental and familial act. And you have to recognize that many blacks or other minorities will disagree with your judgment that you can carry out the parenting job effectively.

For example, most white mothers of black children whom I know realize that having genuine experiences of friendship and black "exposure" is crucial for children of trans-racial families. But they will not risk living in high crime areas, dealing with poor schools, or receiving possible black or white abuse for themselves or their white or black children in order to live in a heavily black-populated area. On the one hand, they don't want to be phony or construct artificial trans-racial experiences. On the other hand, in many cases they don't know any black families, or very few. They don't want to make matters "racial" in tone when they should just be "human." They want their children to be aware of racial identity but they don't want them to feel separated from other people by this identity. The examples of ambivalence could go on and on.

My own experience has been a continual balancing act. I live in a mostly white, blue collar neighborhood, with a few black families. People respond warmly to my daughter--for the most part she is at least another kid on the street and at most a special child for whom neighbors have a special affection. She goes to a thoroughly integrated school with a black principal, but the integration is achieved mainly by the presence of a low-income housing project across from the school and out of our neighborhood. Therefore all of her little playmates are white, except for the occasional child we encounter in visits to other family friends. Only after a great deal of careful exploration with and loving concern by some black parents have I been able to penetrate this economic and racial separation to help her develop a little black girlfriend. We go to a small integrated church, but there are very few children. Her godmother, my closest friend, is black, and I number several black friends among my closest, regular interpersonal relationships. Her extended family adores her, without exception. But their world is entirely white.

The battle is constant: no matter how integrated or loving the immediate and extended family, the segregated patterns of the larger society seriously affect my opportunity to create an integrated world for her. This dimension of parenting in a trans-racial family has its counterparts in any family--it is building values and creating a world in which you want to raise your child. But it raises peculiarly difficult and ambivalent issues for a trans-racial family.

There is yet another dimension to this parental task, and in many ways it is the key issue touched upon by the black social workers. That is the tendency of most well-intentioned whites (especially teachers) to assert that skin color or race "make no difference." Of course they do, and in the most positive way. Race is part of a

child's positive identity. It is not a handicap to be ignored or a problem to be overcome. It must be recognized, discussed openly and freely. It is as much a part of a person's identity as height, weight, personality characteristics, eye and hair color or any other feature which people value (or don't value) about themselves.

My daughter has, for the most part, been quite pleased with her brown skin. From the time she was very small we have talked about it. She knows that colors look especially pretty on her. She enjoys seeing other people who are black because they are like her. She makes all pictures of herself with brown skin (which on white paper has to be a conscious artistic gesture). She reflects on the fact that she wishes we were the same color, but sometimes that means she wants to be white like me or sometimes she wishes I were brown like her. She thinks black is beautiful. And I have slowly learned to think twice about such expressions as "your hands are black--go wash them," or "it's not all black or white," or "the sky is turning black."

The real rub is not with skin color, however, but with the cultural qualities and experiences that usually accompany skin color in America. The black child from a trans-racial family needs to experience blacks in their own culture (which is distinctive) and not merely to experience blacks through the eyes of whites--no matter how well-intentioned. (I can still remember the first time Kristen pointed me out, with a big smile: "Everyone in this room is black except one person.") It is extremely important for white parents of black children to develop meaningful friendships with blacks. But our culture does not promote opportunities for blacks and whites to become <u>friends</u> in the sense of really sharing in one another's lives. And frequently whites feel very uncomfortable with blacks in the world of black culture. Again, this is what the black social workers were getting at, and it is perhaps the most serious difficulty with a trans-racial adoption.

The white parent has to be able to maintain his or her own identity as a person, to relate meaningfully to blacks on their own terms and in their world as well as the white world, and role-model this with some success for a child. Where genuine possibilities for this do not exist, I think a trans-racial adoption may be unwise. Where it is possible, it may offer opportunities for raising a child which celebrate the most important qualities of human life.

As a parent of a bi-racial child you cannot use the child as a "cause celebre." You cannot go around looking for suspicious attitudes toward your child. Further, you have to teach your child how to handle negative attitudes, to see them as the other person's problem, not your child's problem. This is painful and difficult. One day after nursery school two years ago my daughter told me that a little boy in her class said he did not want to play with her because she was black. "What happened?" I said. "Well, mom," she said, "Mrs. Jocelyn told Tommy that he had said something unkind and had hurt <u>everyone's</u> feelings because we <u>all</u> love Kristen." As far as I'm concerned that teacher really earned her money that day. It was a perfect response. On the other hand, one day last spring Kristen looked in the mirror and suddenly said, "I think I'm ugly. I wish I were white. I hate being brown." It took

two days for her to tell me that a little boy on the street had told her she was the color of "B. M." And it took her many months, with a lot of conversation, to begin to restore her good feelings about herself, and to realize that she is also the color of the rich brown earth, our favorite puppy on the street, our new dining room table, and her godmother. Each person is different in some way.

It is difficult to live through these experiences, but I realize her development as a black human being depends on her learning to handle these kinds of situations. I have tried to use the rule of thumb that if other people treat her with respect and kindness I really don't care what their racial attitudes are. And where they do not, she must express her own feelings about it. I only require acceptable behavior, not acceptable morals about race. When she gets older she may choose to add other dimensions to her personal judgment about people. But right now, I primarily want people to relate to her as a person. I'll worry about motivations later.

It is extremely difficult to guess what might lie ahead with our trans-racial family. Will the difference in our race come between us at some future time? Will she feel I don't understand her because I'm not black? Will she leave her white family for a black world? Somehow I cannot surmise that this will happen. We are building the basis for a lifelong relationship now. As long as we can talk to each other in an understanding way, enjoy each other's company, share experiences--and as long as she knows that I can relate in the fullest of human love and friendship with blacks as well as whites, she will know she does not <u>have</u> to make that choice.

Henrietta Towsley: ADOPTION BY AN OLDER SINGLE PERSON

For the obvious reasons, a disproportionate number of single parents are older than most parents when they start their families--many of us are 45 and older.

<u>Advantages</u>: When you are wondering whether you, as a middle-aged person, can really cope with a small child, you should be aware first and foremost that the older person (past 45) has some decided advantages over the younger--don't sell them short! They include:

-- a clearer set of values and priorities. One really does learn from experience and dealing with the range of problems one may face over the years. As a result, one shucks off a number of biases of one's younger years, so that the older person can feel much more confident in dealing with her or his child.

-- less distractions from competing personal drives. A middle-aged person has pretty much accepted herself and her status. So the need to prove oneself professionally, economically, and socially is much less likely to take away from resources (physical, emotional, and financial) that your child needs.

One illustration of how the sharper sense of values of an older person may be very helpful is in the budgeting of time. When an energetic child comes into your

household you must scale down your activities drastically to make room for your child's needs. I suspect it may be easier for an older person to trim down on social activities or to trim down on non-essential tasks than for a younger. A personal example: I admire the tidy houses of my childless friends but never do I envy their more orderly existence. All that peace and quiet! I don't want it. Neither do I envy the fact that they can afford the clothes, the entertainment, the meals out etc. that I gave up to cover my child care expenses. I experienced their life styles; I know my present life style is much more satisfying. If I were younger I think I might have some doubts about some of these things.

The older person may entertain some worries that a young child will make more demands which she will be unable to meet. Answering from my own experience, this proved to be no problem at all. The demand for more energy seems quite naturally to generate new sources of energy. However, one must be realistic in budgeting one's energy. With a tinge of regret, I recognize that I will not be able to take up a strenuous new sport, such as skiing or horseback riding, alongside my child. It is ironic since I had little interest in such activities before my child came.

Locating and adopting: Greater years--particularly when combined with single status--can be a handicap if not an impossible obstacle when seeking to find a child through a placement agency. An agency may be more sympathetic if the older person is prepared (1) to accept an older child (I was offered, and rejected, a 14-year-old) or (2) to accept a hard-to-place, physically handicapped or racial-minority child.

One should distinguished between (1) using the agencies to find the child, and (2) relying upon them to obtain approval as a suitable parent as required for the legal adoption process. For the former, the agency must be convinced that you would provide as good a home as any other applicant for a child. Here both the single and older applicants are at a disadvantage; the single and older candidate undoubtedly so. In the latter case, the criteria are normally related to your ability to provide a good home and secure future for the child. Usually this is a much easier proposition as far as agency recommendations to the judge are concerned, although there have been cases in which the court took an adverse attitude toward older adoptive parents.

The attitude of the social agencies toward your middle-aged status will probably be influenced by:

-- evidence that you are not set in your ways; that you can readily adjust to the revolution in your life style that the entrance of a child brings.

-- evidence that you are flexible enough in your attitudes to adjust to social mores that will inevitably be very different from those prevailing when you were a youngster. In other words, they want some promise that the "generation gap" will not assume unmanageable proportions, as your child moves into the troublesome teen-age years.

-- identification of a member of your family or a friend close to you and your child, who is well-qualified and happy to assume your responsibilities if you should die.

-- a carefully-thought-out financial plan showing that you can provide for the growing child's needs; most importantly, education, when you are living on a retirement income.

A prospective older adoptive parent would be well-advised to determine as fast as possible the attitude of her agency toward older parents, so as not to waste the years waiting in vain for affirmative action. I concluded at age 48 that no agency would help me find my child, and proceeded to concentrate on the private channels.

Relationships and attitudes: What is the child's attitude toward a mother the age of her peers' grandparents? As of age five, mine accepts the situation as quite normal. I do have vivid memories of the concern often expressed to me by the eight-year-old child of a close friend (aged 53) about her mother's age. She was afraid that her mother would die before she was big enough to take care of herself. I would then point out to this child that her mother would surely live to be as old as her granny (aged 75) by which time she would have flown the nest on her own volition.

What are the attitudes of other children? So far, no different than my daughter's. One child did ask if I was my daughter's grandmother or her mother. I suspect that she was prompted to the question by her mother.

The caseworker may try to argue that because you are, say, 48, you should accept a child of about six or eight--perhaps so that your family will resemble more closely the typical biological family. My personal view is that whatever the age of the child you want, your choice should be decisive. The difference of a few years in the child's age is relatively unimportant. Persist in looking for the child you want. I felt strongly that a working single parent is not able to handle a seriously handicapped child. I wanted an infant and in retrospect I am dismayed at the thought of all I would have missed in taking the older child the agency thought more appropriate.

What are the attitudes of the parents of my daughter's friends? They vary --I feel like the contemporary of some mothers despite the fact that I am the age of their mothers. Some seem to accept me accordingly. Others seem disinterested in me--especially some who are seeking to use their children as the channel to new friends.

The first meeting of the parents and teachers at my child's day nursery was a surprise. There were other middle-aged faces around; so it is in her elementary school as well. I am very curious as to how they happen to be so old, but so far I haven't dared inquire.

What are my feelings about being a half-century older than my daughter? Most importantly, I find now that other mothers with children my daughter's age are much more interesting to me than are my contemporaries. I soon abandoned all vanity and attempts to conceal the obvious. I enjoy the notion that I have put one over on nature--I felt glee in telling that curious child in front of her mother that I was the mother of her schoolmate.

The one other problem of being an older parent is that I do worry about not surviving until my child is grown. I have a morbid interest in reading the obituaries and noting the age of each of the deceased. I do worry about taking on a second child

when I am five years older than I was when I acquired my first. I wonder about how big a problem the gap in years will be when she is in the difficult teen-age years, but deep down I feel confident.

All other problems, I think, are a matter of degree, not kind.

Practical Steps: Financially, the need to plan on putting a child through college when you are on a retirement income requires careful planning. Life insurance is more costly for the older person. After age 55, even term insurance is almost prohibitively high. My pension (federal government) will not provide sufficient survivors' benefits for a child fifty years my junior, so that it must be scratched from the list of assets available to my child if anything happens to me. Check your own pension and life insurance policies for provisions relating to difference in age between yourself and the child beneficiary.

Obviously, this is no place for investment counseling, but explore with your attorney or tax accountant the possibility of putting your securities into a trust for your child. I understand that you can pay all expenses for school, doctors, etc. from the income, but the income from the trust will be taxable to the child rather than you, at presumably much lower rates. I personally believe it is important to acquire ownership of a house or condominium so that your child will benefit from the equity built up over the years, if you do not survive, to see your child through to financial independence.

James Forderer: ADOPTION BY A SINGLE MAN

Why would a man become a single parent? If you are a man, you may think that you are a bit unusual to consider taking this step. Everyone knows parenting is a woman's job. Of course there have been quite a few popular TV shows that depict the single male parent, and the idea that a man can be an effective parent is true not only in the make-believe television world but in real life. But why would a man want to put himself in this position?

The answer to this question would be different for each single male parent, but there are some general feelings that all who willingly become adoptive parents have in common. Some are: an interest in children, concern for the well-being of the future generation, and a desire to share one's life with a young person. It is a challenge to have a role in shaping the life and the personality of a young person. It is a role that requires a lot of giving on the parent's part, and is rewarded in the depth of the relationship and the exchange of feelings between a parent and his child. There are many times when this relationship will cause frustration and hurt, and that is part of the experience of being a parent. If a person wants to experience really deep relationships in his life, he must be willing to feel the full range of emotions associated with it--joy, sadness, frustration, anger, hurt, pride, anxiety, happiness in love. Parenthood is one of the very few relationships in your life that will require so much of you.

What can you expect in a home study? Anyone going into a home study must be prepared to reveal his innermost thoughts and feelings on many subjects to a relative stranger. The social worker conducting the interview has a number of things he or she wants to find out: does your lifestyle allow for a child? Are you stable emotionally, physically, and financially? What are your motives for adoption? What sort of sex life do you currently have? What are your feelings about sex, and how will you transmit them to a child? What sort of childhood did you have and what was your relationship with your own parents? How do you relate to people of the same and the opposite sex? What previous experience have you had with children? Who else will be involved with the upbringing of your child? How do you express your emotions? What provisions will you make to provide your child with a relationship with someone from the opposite sex? The questions can go on and on. Each social worker will have her own set of questions and her own style of conducting an interview. The important thing to keep in mind is that most of these questions are designed to help the social worker know you better, so that she can decide if you are cut out to be a parent and if so, what sort of child would do best in your home.

> Don't try to figure out what the social worker wants to hear and give answers that aren't honest. It is much better to try to find a social worker that you can feel comfortable with, and then to be completely honest with that person. If you feel that you cannot relate easily to the social worker assigned to your case, try to get a different worker if possible. Ask her right at the start how she personally feels about placing a child with a single male, and if you sense that she may have some hang-ups, try to get a different worker. Don't feel bashful about asserting yourself: you are the one who is going to provide a home for a child; you are a good person and should be treated with the same respect and consideration given to any other qualified applicant.

In a small agency it might not be possible to have your choice of workers, and you might have to undergo a home study with someone who is not completely sold on single parent adoptions--let alone single male adoptions. If so, it might be helpful to provide some material on single-person adoptions to the worker, or put her in touch with someone in another agency who has made single parent placements.

The social worker can usually determine fairly quickly whether or not you could become a parent--what is harder to determine is what kind of child would do best in your home. You may be quite flexible about the type of child you are willing to raise, but the more specific you can be, the easier it will be for your worker to find the right child for you.

What are your chances of getting a child? That depends to some extent on the type of child you are looking for. If you have specified a caucasian female infant, your chances are about zero. On the other hand, if you are hoping for an older boy--say between age eight and fourteen, your chances are very good. Adoption workers are finding that this kind of child often does better in a single male household than in a two-parent family. The reason is that many of these children have suffered several failed placements in two-parent homes; sometimes they have been distrustful of the family setting, and have manipulated the parents so that it has been very difficult for

him to form a strong relationship with the entire family. If he can concentrate all his emotional efforts into forming a relationship with just one person, he may be successful. In other instances a child may have suffered emotional damage from a mother or foster mother in his past, who might have been a cold, or cruel, or manipulative individual; now he finds it impossible to trust and love a mother figure.

Other kinds of "hard to place" children are sometimes placed in a single parent home in preference to an institution, or a series of foster homes. These can include mixed-race or minority-race children, on occasion, as well as physically handicapped or mentally retarded children.

> The important thing is that you only accept a child that you really want in your family. It would be disastrous to take a minority child or a handicapped child only if you felt that this would be better than nothing. It would also be wrong to take a child only because you felt that no one else would take him if you didn't. Motives of pity or guilt turn out badly in the end both for you and for the child. If you don't sincerely want the first child described to you, don't be afraid to say so. Other children also want homes, and one of them is the right one for you. Your relationship is going to last a lifetime, so you should take the time to make the right choice.

Adopting the Older Child: Most men do not want to go through the diaper and bottle stage--and it could be said that if a child ever really needs a mother it is at this time. You may be an exception, and you may have someone who can help you raise an infant. However, most men would prefer a child who can be in school during most of the working day, eliminating much of the paid child care necessary for a younger child. It can be a bit more interesting to have a child who can talk in sentences, and who already has interests of his own. By the time a child is eight or nine he is already quite independent, and is going to school the full day.

Each stage of a child's life is interesting and has its own charm. Having a younger child allows the parent to experience more of his child's development, and to have a greater influence on the child's personality. But by the time the child is eight, because one can pretty well determine what his personality is like, you have the advantage of being able to judge more easily whether or not your two personalities will fit well together.

At present, most men have boys placed with them, for a variety of reasons. First, this is usually the sex asked for by the applicant. Second, there is still an agency hang-up about the impropriety of placing a girl with a single male. Lastly, boys form the majority of the older children needing homes.

How would a child affect my life style? Basically, your lifestyle should not change very radically when you adopt a child. You are probably a pretty steady guy who has a circle of friends and likes to do things with them from time to time, but you probably don't party every night or pick up and travel around whenever the spirit moves you. Having a child will have some effect on your social life. If you go out with your friends, you will probably have to get a babysitter, unless you live with someone who can watch him while you are out. Your friends who like children will

not be much affected by your adoption, and may actually spend extra time with your child. Those of your friends who don't like children will probably see less of you, as you will probably include your child in many of your social functions.

You may worry that adopting a child may scare some of your dates off. Perhaps, but if you like children enough to adopt one, you probably like women who like children also. If not, they may not be the best dates in the world for you anyway. Jealousy may develop, either because your child feels that you spend too much time on dates and not enough with him, or because your date feels that you care more for your child than for her. This can sometimes be alleviated if your date and your child can get to be friends (assuming you are seeing one person more or less steadily at any given time). This can give your child the opportunity to experience contact with someone of the opposite sex. If this doesn't work out, however, you must keep in mind that your first responsibility is to your child, and you must work the situation out to his best interest.

The Reactions of Relatives: Your parents and other relatives will also become part of this child's family and, because you are single, may play an important part in his upbringing. Parents especially like to be informed about an upcoming adoption, and most parents will be able to accept the idea, once they understand their son's motives. After all, most parents want grandchildren, and many of them put up with daughters-in-law just for the opportunity to have grandchildren. Once they think it over, they may decide that this is an improvement over the usual system!

Although adoption must be your decision, you must give some thought to how the child will be accepted by your family. Will they be able to accept a child of a different race? A handicapped or retarded grandchild? Even though you may have no problems, a serious rejection of your child by the rest of the family would have an effect on the way he feels about himself and should be taken into consideration. Fortunately, many parents or other relatives who have felt before the adoption that they couldn't accept a certain child, discover that they accept and love him completely afterwards, when they come to know him as a person and not just a concept.

Financial Considerations: There is no doubt that raising children is expensive. Your food bill will close to double if you had been cooking just for yourself. You have to have suitable housing, which means a separate bedroom for your child, and if you have been living in a one-bedroom apartment or with roommates, you will probably have to move. Children tend to be rough on clothes--they wear them out, lose them, and outgrow them; it is a never-ending battle to keep a child clothed.

Your child is going to want toys to play with; perhaps a bike, sports equipment, hobby materials, games etc. There are also additional expenses in health care insurance, life insurance, dental bills, school costs and others. Some of these may be covered under fringe benefits where you work.

If these expenses are going to cause you great hardship but you still sincerely want to adopt, you might look into subsidized adoption, available in various forms in most, if not all, of the States. In this program a subsidy is paid by the Welfare Department, on the basis that it would cost the taxpayer money to keep the child in an alternate form of care such as an institution or foster home, and that it is worth a lesser expenditure to assure him a permanent home.

Subsidies usually include some sort of public health insurance, and will often cover special medical or psychological services should they be necessary. You should bear in mind that the subsidies will not cover the complete expenses for a child, and that they are temporary, sometimes lasting as little as three years (depending on the type and need for subsidy). Check with your social worker to find out whether your state has such a program or programs, and whether you and your child would qualify. If you think you might need financial help, you should apply for adoption through the public adoption agencies, as they are the ones that can arrange for such aid.

Time Considerations: Once you become a parent you will become involved in school conferences, Little League or other sporting programs, scouting, various lessons, your children's parties and outings with your child. Depending on both of your interests, you will be doing a lot more things that you didn't do before, and in some cases, you will really rather be doing something else instead. This is part and parcel of being a parent, and you have to want this involvement before you take on the responsibility.

> There may be some demands on you that don't come out of your free time. There will be times when your child is sick and you will have to stay home from work to take care of him. You may find yourself called at your job by the school, to say that your child is sick or has behavioral problems. It might be a neighbor calling to say that your child is in some kind of trouble. It will help if you can call on someone to help out in these matters, but in any event, be prepared to handle situations that did not come up before you had a child.

Supervision: You will particularly need to arrange a care program during school and summer vacations. For the day off or the week's vacation it is not so difficult to arrange for someone to come in and supervise, or to have your child go over to a friend's or relative's house. An all-day program for an entire summer is another matter, but there are several alternatives open to you. One is to enroll your child in a summer-school program, which will take up about half a day in June and July but which doesn't usually include August. There are city or private day-camp programs, usually held in local parks and supervised by professional staff. The agency may or may not provide transportation. There are also resident summer camps taking boys for one to eight weeks. Some, run by public organizations such as the YMCA or the Boy Scouts, do not charge a large fee, but they are generally short-term, one- or two-week experiences. Private resident camps take children for longer periods, but also charge much higher fees.

> If you do consider a summer camp for your child, make sure that it is something that he wants. Many older adopted children have been abandoned in their pasts, and sending them off to camp might cause a traumatic experience. The age of your child is also a factor, of course.

Every single parent--including two-parent families where both work--has to cope with the supervision problem in one way or another. Some fortunate people live and work at the same place and can keep an eye on their child most of the time. Some single parents have chosen to live in communes where the various members share the responsibility of child care. But most single parents need to arrange child care with babysitters, relatives, or a child care center.

Children with Problems: Children sometimes develop problems that take more help than a parent is able to give. This can be particularly true with an older adopted child, who bears the emotional scars of a disrupted life. For the adopting parent, it can be very hard to admit to himself or to others that he has a problem that is too big for him to handle. It may seem like admitting failure as a parent; but this is not true. It is the mark of a mature personality to be able to say "I need help."

Who is there that you can turn to for help? The first person who should come to mind is the adoption worker who placed the child with you. She or he is responsible for the placement, and is also the person who should know most about your child's background, which might key your approach to dealing with the problem. Even if she doesn't know the answers, she should know what the community resources are and where to turn for further help.

Sometimes talking with another parent can show you how others have handled the same problem, or can help you assess whether the situation might warrant real professional help or might work itself out. Some metropolitan areas have groups of adoptive parents, who meet on a regular basis and support their members in all areas of child raising. You might consider joining such a Council or Committee of adoptive parents, both as a social outlet and a support factor in your role as a single parent. Incidentally, most such groups welcome participation by people who are not yet parents but who are considering adoption.

Other help might come from your church, the school your child is attending, and local mental health or family service agencies. The important thing to remember is that if your child should develop some serious emotional or behavioral problems, you should not look on them as caused by poor parenting but rather as the manifestation of many factors that have been involved in your child's life. You should not feel personally guilty about these problems, or consider that they mark you as a failure. You only become a failure if you try to hide the problems, and do not give your child every opportunity possible to seek help in handling his problems.

After reading some of the costs and problems that you might have to cope with, you might feel that adoption is not worth the effort. If you have to have your arm twisted to make up your mind, then it probably isn't for you. If, on the other hand, you have a gut-level feeling that in spite of all the pitfalls you still want to make the commitment, and that you could handle whatever changes might be necessary in your lifestyle, then you are the sort of person who should consider single parenthood. There is a great need for effective single male parents in our society. There are many children who will not have a home of their own to grow up in, and so will spend their childhood in a kind of limbo, without permanent ties with anyone. There are not enough two-parent families to take all the older children who are freed for adoption, and even if there were, these might not be the best possible placement for such children. If you want to make the commitment to share your life with a child and be a part of that person's life and roots for the rest of your life; if you are willing to withstand the tremendous demands emotionally, financially, and socially that will be made on you, then you are indeed needed.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Handling Questions:

Finally, how should you answer the sincere, or uninformed, or just nutty reactions of other people when you say you are, or are going to be, a single parent?

"What a wonderful thing you are doing!" Don't feel uncomfortable when you hear this--and you'll hear it a lot. This kind compliment usually comes from people with half-remembered notions of workhouse-orphanages, and their general concept is that you are turning your life upside down chiefly to do good to some little waif. The kernel of solid truth in it is that in the case of some hard-to-place children or some aliens, you may indeed be saving your child from a miserable life, or even from death by starvation and disease.

The point, however, is that this is not why you are doing it. Cautionary articles on adoption often provide a list of The Wrong Motives for Adoption. In our case, one example is "She's just adopting to fill her empty life" (which goes along with "poor thing, she never got married"). More bluntly stated, the question asked is "Are you adopting for yourself or for the child?" By that logic, the only proper answer is "It will be a dreadful trial, but I feel I ought to make some little child happy." A good adoption social worker would end the interview right there.

Of course you are adopting for yourself. You want a baby to love. You want a child who will love you back. This is a sound foundation for the kind of parent-child tie that gives the child a feeling of solid security. Beyond that, you will have a mixture of motives, some self-centered and some angelic--like adopting couples and like biological parents all through history. Bear in mind that a large number of biological parents do not plan their children at all (perhaps the understatement of the year) and that a good many more babies are conceived not for their sakes but to provide a playmate for the first child or to Carry On the Family Name or for other less-than-saintly reasons. Once the small person arrives and asserts an independent person-hood and a definite personality, he or she is thoroughly loved for himself or herself, in the great majority of cases.

On the other hand, single parents are also criticized sharply, as you may have found out, on the ground that every child should have two loving parents. Of course he should, and we should all be saints. Don't bother to argue with that attitude. You must already feel strongly that you, alone, will be at least as good a parent as most couples. A child with a father who is there in the evening and on weekends, who supports and loves the child, and who also loves the child's mother, is lucky indeed; and fortunately there are many such children. There are also many who might as well be children of single parents, for all that they see of or learn from the second parent, and a strong loving single parent is at least the equal in that situation and probably better. We have fought to get our children, and we will not be transmitting to them hang-ups about an ex-spouse or fears about our ability to make it alone in the big harsh world; nor would we be using the child as a lever in a bad relationship with a husband (or wife).

It is often said that people who are getting married these days are also getting divorced these days, at the rate of one marriage in three. It is true that the child of divorce retains his or her other parent, at least on Sundays, or at least two weeks a year, or whatever the custody arrangement specifies. It is also true, however, that unless the marriage was unusually destructive all round, most children are torn by the divorce of their parents.

It is not unusual for a child to feel that he or she is to blame for the unaccountable disaster that has blown his secure home away. At best, the child cannot understand why the two people he loves cannot love each other--or love him? --enough to stay together. By definition, a single adoptive parent does not inflict such pain on his or her child.

"They must be homosexuals and child molesters." We have never seen or heard of any study that supports this lunatic statement. It is partly an outgrowth of the feeling that if you are not married (or if you are divorced or widowed and have not remarried) there must be something wrong with you. Partly, it may be a fear that a sick mind will take advantage of an adoptive relationship. Actually, it is a direct slap at you that would not be made under any other circumstance, and it endangers all other single parents as well. Although it may be your private opinion that the statement reveals more about the person making it than about reality, it is worth trying to combat. You can say that around ten million children--one in six--in the United States live in single-parent situations, because of death or divorce of the other parent, in almost every case. You can point out that in nearly every State in the Union a single adoptive parent must undergo a "home study" by a recognized, licensed agency. There is as slight a chance that a pathological single person will escape recognition as that a couple will, and no one is making comparable accusations against couples.

"Your children don't look a bit like you ----?" The inquisitive question is another problem that single--or married--parents may face, especially in interracial adoptions. One is tempted to serve back a shocker ("yes, they all had different fathers") and if that eases your indignation, okay. Think of the impact on the child, however, and try to avoid open anger that can make a child anxious or fearful. There will always be nosy people and you don't owe them an explanation unless you feel like it. It might be an opportunity to change that person's outlook on single person adoption: "Well, what a wonderful thing you are doing!"